

## Governor Rejects Federal High Speed Rail Money

THE LEDGER

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LAKELAND | Gov. Rick Scott announced this morning he is rejecting \$2.4 billion federal money for the high-speed rail route from Orlando to Tampa.

The \$2.8 billion project runs along an 84-mile route between Orlando International Airport and downtown Tampa, with a stop somewhere in Lakeland.

Gov. Scott's announcement was not received well in Polk County.

"That's an economic blow to Polk County," County Commission Chairman Ed Smith said this morning.

Bob Gernert, executive director of the Winter Haven Area Chamber of Commerce, called the news "disappointing."

"Oh, my gosh," Gernert said, explaining he couldn't understand the decision.

"Anyone who has experienced European trains can only lament the decision."

Scott had promised a decision early this year after reviewing the numbers surrounding the project.

He is the third governor to reject high-speed rail funds. Governors in Wisconsin and Ohio last year rejected the money.

The project has been criticized by conservatives as too expensive and likely to create an unnecessary burden on taxpayers to subsidize its operation.

Lakeland Mayor Gow Fields said he was "greatly disappointed."

"We will have to keep moving forward to take care of the transportation needs of a growing region we are in the middle of," Fields said.

Fields said Scott should have given private businesses an opportunity to come up with a financial plan for high-speed rail for the next 20 years.

“That was the most effective way to evaluate a business,” Fields said.

Fields said high-speed rail would have brought a number of businesses to the area.

“Commute time would not have been an issue,” Fields said.

Despite the decision, Fields said high-speed rail wasn't dead.

“It will get another chance,” Fields said. “How soon, I don't know.”

City Commissioner Justin Troller was also discouraged to hear the news.

“I don't know where his 700,000 jobs are going to come in when he's rejecting an opportunity to move Florida into the 21st century,” Troller said.

Troller said high speed rail would have “moved America forward.”

“I'm disappointed,” Troller said. “Where are the jobs going to come from?”

Troller was refering to Scott's promise to create 700,000 in seven years.